

## **The Montana Plan - Ongoing Efforts**

### **COMMON CORE STANDARDS**

OPI has been engaged in the Common Core State Standards Initiative led by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). We have convened instructional leaders from across the state to review the draft releases of the Career and College Ready Standards, the K-12 English/Language Arts, and Mathematics Standards. The process of bringing these standards into Montana classrooms will make its way into the structure of our Board of Public Education (BPE) decision making process, which embraces public participation and provides meaningful leadership along the way. The final standards were released in early June, which triggered the process of considering what Montana will do regarding the adoption of these standards. OPI has developed a schedule of review and recommendation that could end in a recommendation by the Superintendent of Public Instruction as early as September 2010.

### **RACE TO THE TOP ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

Montana continues to be an active participant in the RTTT Assessment Program; the guidelines for this program were released by the U.S. Department of Education (USED) several months ago. Montana is committed to participating in this program as long as it appears to be of benefit to education in our state. This effort is clearly tied to the Common Core Standards work and will be critical to measuring our progress and success along the way as these changes occur in Montana. Two consortia submitted applications to the USED in June, and Montana is a Governing Member of the SMARTER/Balanced Consortia. Finalists are expected to be announced in early September 2010.

### **DISTANCE LEARNING**

In order to provide a rich and complete set of course offerings to all corners of a large and sparsely populated state like Montana, distance learning and dual enrollment can play a huge role in providing greater access to opportunity for all students and were supported in the Montana RTTT application.

### **PERFORMANCE BASED ACCREDITATION**

OPI is leading the Chapter 55 Task Force through a process of examining the current content of Chapter 55 of the Montana Accreditation Standards, which are used to accredit Montana's public schools, and is considering a blend of our current process and a performance-based system. The work of the Task Force began in May and has continued in June and July. This 27-member group has a broad cross-section of representatives from across Montana and may have a recommendation to the Superintendent of Public Instruction as early as November 2010 for her consideration.

### **LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEM**

A proposal to build a data system that will allow for tracking a wide variety of district, school, and student assessment data over time was written into the Montana RTTT application. Data in a system like this would be available for use in the classroom, by the school principal, district leadership, and state-level officials. This data could be used at the classroom level toward directing instruction as deemed appropriate in their setting, at the school and district level to track progress and special topics over time and at the state level to develop responsive assistance plans for schools and districts as described above. Other external funding sources will be pursued to make a system like this a reality.

## **TEACHER AND SCHOOL LEADERS EVALUATION FRAMEWORK**

There are many well-founded, research-based models available to local school systems as they work with their teachers and school leaders collaboratively on this topic, but what is missing is a clear Montana direction around this issue. A recommendation to the BPE that will provide a framework for all school systems in Montana to use to ensure that there is a minimum of consistency and expectation in the performance of those who lead and teach in our schools will be developed with input from stakeholders and experts. It should be noted that Montana is a collective bargaining state. As such, both the LEA and its bargaining units have the authority to deliberate and decide equally on any issues like evaluation systems and procedures regarding the details of carrying out the evaluation process and recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers. The work of developing this framework will be completed by a sub-committee of the Chapter 55 Task Force.

## **TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL PREPERATION**

Teacher and administrator preparation in Montana should parallel the needs and directions of the future of education in Montana schools to ensure that future and practicing teachers and leaders have the skills to make this come to fruition where they live and work. OPI has developed a working relationship with Montana State University and the University of Montana teacher and administrator preparation programs and their respective leadership and the State-Wide Consortium of Deans to support their innovative efforts already in place and to work together collaboratively on developing programs that prepare new and practicing teachers and administrators for the future of education in Montana.

## **SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT FOR MONTANA'S LOWEST ACHIEVING SCHOOLS**

When students in any Montana school have performed at the lowest of levels over time, unusual steps are called for to assist and direct those schools and districts. In an effort to address these needs, OPI will be asking stakeholders to come to the table and search for a workable solution. As with other significant reform issues, stakeholder engagement in developing this system is critical to ensure effectiveness.